

(1) minimize the possibility of conflicts of interest, to the extent practicable; and

(2) establish procedures that ensure against the use of a certifying organization referred to in subsection (b)(5) that has a financial conflict of interest regarding the certification of an eligible provider.

(g) BIENNIAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date on which the Secretary updates Veterans Health Administration Handbook 1173.4, or any successor handbook or directive, under subsection (d), and not less frequently than once every other year thereafter through 2022, the Secretary shall submit to the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and the Committee on Veterans' Affairs of the House of Representatives a report on the implementation and facility compliance with the policy developed under subsection (a).

(2) CONTENTS.—The report required by paragraph (1) shall include the following:

(A) A description of the implementation plan for the policy developed under subsection (a) and any revisions to such policy under subsection (d).

(B) A description of the performance measures used to determine the effectiveness of such policy in ensuring the safety of veterans enrolled in the automobile adaptive equipment program.

(C) An assessment of safety issues due to improper installations based on a survey of recipients of adaptive equipment from the Department.

(D) An assessment of the adequacy of the adaptive equipment services of the Department based on a survey of recipients of adaptive equipment from the Department.

(E) An assessment of the training provided to the personnel of the Department with respect to administering the program.

(F) An assessment of the certified providers of the Department of adaptive equipment with respect to meeting the minimum standards developed under subsection (b)(2).

(h) DEFINITIONS.—In this section:

(1) AUTOMOBILE ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT PROGRAM.—The term “automobile adaptive equipment program” means the program administered by the Secretary of Veterans Affairs pursuant to chapter 39 of title 38, United States Code.

(2) VETERANS SERVICE ORGANIZATION.—The term “veterans service organization” means any organization recognized by the Secretary for the representation of veterans under section 5902 of title 38, United States Code.

SEC. 4. APPOINTMENT OF LICENSED HEARING AID SPECIALISTS IN VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION.

(a) LICENSED HEARING AID SPECIALISTS.—

(1) APPOINTMENT.—Section 7401(3) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting “licensed hearing aid specialists,” after “Audiologists.”.

(2) QUALIFICATIONS.—Section 7402(b)(14) of such title is amended by inserting “, hearing aid specialist” after “dental technologist”.

(b) REQUIREMENTS.—With respect to appointing hearing aid specialists under sections 7401 and 7402 of title 38, United States Code, as amended by subsection (a), and providing services furnished by such specialists, the Secretary shall ensure that—

(1) a hearing aid specialist may only perform hearing services consistent with the hearing aid specialist's State license related to the practice of fitting and dispensing hearing aids without excluding other qualified professionals, including audiologists, from rendering services in overlapping practice areas;

(2) services provided to veterans by hearing aid specialists shall be provided as part of

the non-medical treatment plan developed by an audiologist; and

(3) the medical facilities of the Department of Veterans Affairs provide to veterans access to the full range of professional services provided by an audiologist.

(c) CONSULTATION.—In determining the qualifications required for hearing aid specialists and in carrying out subsection (b), the Secretary shall consult with veterans service organizations, audiologists, otolaryngologists, hearing aid specialists, and other stakeholder and industry groups as the Secretary determines appropriate.

(d) ANNUAL REPORT.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—Not later than 1 year after the date of the enactment of this Act, and annually thereafter during the 5-year period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall submit to Congress a report on the following:

(A) Timely access of veterans to hearing health services through the Department of Veterans Affairs.

(B) Contracting policies of the Department with respect to providing hearing health services to veterans in facilities that are not facilities of the Department.

(2) TIMELY ACCESS TO SERVICES.—Each report shall, with respect to the matter specified in paragraph (1)(A) for the 1-year period preceding the submittal of such report, include the following:

(A) The staffing levels of audiologists, hearing aid specialists, and health technicians in audiology in the Veterans Health Administration.

(B) A description of the metrics used by the Secretary in measuring performance with respect to appointments and care relating to hearing health.

(C) The average time that a veteran waits to receive an appointment, beginning on the date on which the veteran makes the request, for the following:

(i) A disability rating evaluation for a hearing-related disability.

(ii) A hearing aid evaluation.

(iii) Dispensing of hearing aids.

(iv) Any follow-up hearing health appointment.

(D) The percentage of veterans whose total wait time for appointments described in subparagraph (C), including an initial and follow-up appointment, if applicable, is more than 30 days.

(3) CONTRACTING POLICIES.—Each report shall, with respect to the matter specified in paragraph (1)(B) for the 1-year period preceding the submittal of such report, include the following:

(A) The number of veterans that the Secretary refers to non-Department audiologists for hearing health care appointments.

(B) The number of veterans that the Secretary refers to non-Department hearing aid specialists for follow-up appointments for a hearing aid evaluation, the dispensing of hearing aids, or any other purpose relating to hearing health.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on November 17, 2016, at 11:55 a.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Select Committee On Intelligence be authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on November 17, 2016, at 2 p.m., in room SH-219 of the Hart Senate Office Building.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

PRIVILEGES OF THE FLOOR

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Sophia Vogt and Emily Douglas, legislative fellow in my office, be granted the privilege of the floor for the remainder of this Congress.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. NELSON. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that Major—Lieutenant Colonel-select—Chivis, our defense fellow, be granted the privileges of the floor for the rest of this session.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The majority leader.

UNANIMOUS CONSENT AGREEMENT—S. 2873

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, November 29, the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions be discharged from further consideration of S. 2873 and the Senate proceed to its immediate consideration. I further ask consent that the Alexander substitute amendment No. 5110 be agreed to, that there be up to 30 minutes of debate, equally divided in the usual form, and following the use or yielding back of that time, the bill, as amended, be read a third time, and the Senate vote on the bill, as amended, with no intervening action or debate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TOM STAGG FEDERAL BUILDING AND UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I ask the Chair to lay before the Senate the message to accompany S. 2754.

The Presiding Officer laid before the Senate the following message from the House of Representatives:

Resolved, That the bill from the Senate (S. 2754) entitled “An Act to designate the Federal building and United States courthouse located at 300 Fannin Street in Shreveport, Louisiana, as the ‘Tom Stagg Federal Building and United States Courthouse’.”, do pass with amendments.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, I move to concur in the House amendment and the House title amendment. I further ask unanimous consent that the motions be agreed to and the motions to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table.